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Dear Sir/Madam:

As you face the decision before you in the sentencing of Joel Smithers, I respectfully write in the hope my words may in some way be considered as you discharge your responsibilities in this matter.

Joel and I worked together for years as search and rescue teammates sharing a barracks, and we became close friends. I have been the best man at Joel's wedding. I have been there through Joel's heartbreak as his marriage dissolved through the rigors of two spouses both in medical school, each in different states. I have seen Joel's excitement to find love again with Angel, and the children he calls his own, and the children they have since had together.

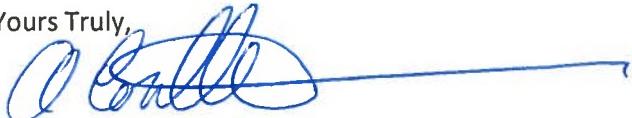
Joel and I completed our professional designations in separate fields, regularly comparing our journeys, which each demanded comparable rigor. Joel's work ethic, perseverance, and diligence are illustrated as he worked his way from a home school student to college acceptance, followed by medical school. I have visited, called, and talked to Joel as he walked through the unravelling of his medical practice and the journey through the justice system.

I do not profess to know the intricate details of the charges and findings against Joel, beyond the charges and conviction. I do know who Joel is. His commitment to his family through the past few years, working to give Angel and his children what he was able as he worked all manner of odd jobs to provide, is part of who he is. Giving of himself in whatever manner was possible, in whatever circumstance he was in.

I also know Joel to carry the burden of the findings against him, the implications on his profession, his patients, his family, his wife and his children. Whatever sentence is imposed will be felt all the more heavily by Joel, as his children grow, and Angel manages these years without his provision, presence, or partnership.

As you decide Joel's sentence, I appeal to you to weigh the years of separation and the future impact on the young lives he remains tied to, as part of the judgement, in addition to the years that Joel will lose personally. The Joel I know, and the brother he became to me, will embrace any opportunity to once again contribute to his family, his community, and his country. I implore you to provide him this hope to the extent of the discretion you hold.

Yours Truly,



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